



# Arts & Dementia

## Pocket Guide for Carers



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# Contents

	page
<b>Introduction</b>	
Using this Guide	6
<b>Section 1: Basics</b>	
Person-Centred Care	9
Creativity and Caring	10
Communicating Effectively	12
<b>Section 2: Getting Started</b>	
Preparations	14
Creating a Theme	15
Rules	16
Warming Up	18
<b>Section 3: Arts Activities</b>	
Singing	27
Creative Writing	32
Storytelling	40
Movement	47
Cooling Down	52
<b>Section 4: Next Steps</b>	
Staff Development	56
Resources	57

# Introduction

Creative activity is a crucial weapon in the battle against dementia.

All available evidence indicates that imaginative mental exercises have a direct, positive impact on the health of individuals living with the condition.

Arts-based activities such as the ones featured in this guide have been shown to help people with dementia to manage their symptoms, significantly enhancing their quality of life in the process.

Regular participation in these activities:

## INCREASES

- Physical movement
- Communication skills
- Face-name recognition
- Ability to recall life events
- Quality of social interaction
- Collaboration and alertness
- Spontaneous activity

## DECREASES

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Agitation

Creative Arts-based activities can't replace conventional treatment, of course. But they *can* provide an alternative to pharmacological solutions, enable improved communication and help people to feel part of a community.

They are also wonderful *enablers*, allowing people to live with dementia - and, often, to live well.

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This guide is the result of three years of research in Merseyside with the carers of people living with dementia. We hope that many more healthcare professionals will use these techniques to find out more about each other, to learn, to take notice of their surroundings, to be active, creative and, most importantly, to have fun!

Whether you have an hour to spend or just want to add a new spark to your daily routine, we hope you'll find something here to help and inspire.

# Using this Guide

This guide contains tips on how to engage more effectively with people living with dementia and details a number of Arts-based exercises designed to engage their creative imaginations. Although primarily aimed at care staff, it is also relevant for kitchen staff, cleaners, clinicians and managers.

For ease of use, we have colour-coded the pages.

- The first section, **IN GREEN**, explains a few basic facts about working with people living with dementia and suggests a number of simple techniques that can be used to make their day-to-day lives more creative.
- The second section, **IN BLUE**, contains information about preparations necessary for organising Arts workshops – as well as a few rules for running them. This section also contains a series of warm-up exercises designed to lighten the mood and get participants into the swing of things.

- In the third section, **IN RED** are examples of creative activities that carers in Merseyside have found therapeutically useful. Above each activity are listed the main aims of the exercise and the equipment needed, alongside any other preparations necessary beforehand.
- The final section, **IN PURPLE**, offers advice for care managers on how to encourage staff members to be creative with the individuals they care for. It includes information on where to source equipment useful for creative activities, and a list of local Arts organisations which develop work specifically for people with dementia.

It is not necessary to read this guide from cover to cover. The exercises **in the red section** make perfect sense in isolation. Jump in wherever you like!

# The Basics





# Person-Centred Care

Person-Centred Care involves tailoring therapy specifically to meet the recipient's interests, abilities, history and personality. The goal is to support patients using the activities that *they* enjoy instead of following a formal one-size-fits-all routine.

## Key Principles

1. Treat people with **dignity and respect**.
2. **Value** each person as an individual. Understand their history, lifestyle, culture, preferences, hobbies and interests.
3. **Evaluate** situations from the patient's point of view.
4. Provide **opportunities for interaction**, conversations and relationships.
5. Offer opportunities to try **new experiences** and participate in enjoyable activities.

# Creativity & Caring

Incorporating the Arts in a Person-Centred Care regime isn't about composing sonnets or painting masterpieces. It's about encouraging use of the imagination, engaging interest, stimulating conversation - and having fun.

Creative and imaginative thinking can be fostered through regular activities such as the ones in the red section but for maximum effect they should be encouraged *throughout the day* as part of the care routine.

There are many ways this can be done but to get you started, here are some suggestions:

- **Chat to those who enjoy reminiscing.** Write down what they say. Assemble notes into stories, journals or poems then read them aloud, insert them into care plans or frame them on walls.
- **Talk to people about their clothes.** What colour are they? What fabric are they made of? How do they feel? This could lead to discussions about fashion or favourite outfits. Introduce pictures from fashion magazines and make a collage.
- **At mealtimes, prompt memories related to food.** Write them down and create a recipe book, or organise a cooking and tasting session.

- **Pick a random photograph from a newspaper and invent a story about it.** What's going on? Where has this person come from? Where are they going?
- **Turn off the radio and sing yourself.** Make singing a feature of the daily routine - for example when you wake someone up, in the bathroom or during mealtimes.
- **Discuss the view outside.** Ask questions about the weather or the seasonal colours. Ask people what they see, what they find beautiful and how the light may affect the way they're feeling.
- **Chat about holidays and favourite places.** Bring in pictures or objects from countries that people have visited.
- **Discuss objects in the room.** Learning what mementoes and photographs mean to someone living with dementia is a great entry point into happy memories. If they don't mean anything, try making up stories about them.
- **Take photographs of possessions, objects, each other or nature.** Discuss what to photograph. Print favourite images and ask residents if they'd like them in their rooms, on their walls or in communal areas.

# Communicating Effectively

**Use your eyes.** Make eye contact with the person you are caring for and hold it. Eyes, together with body language, offer a window into their inner feelings and concerns, alerting you in advance if they are becoming tense, fearful, worried or bored and allowing you to intervene and reassure if necessary.

**Use your hands.** Physical contact communicates warmth, affection and sympathy.

**Bend, kneel or sit on the floor.** Position yourself on the same level as the person you're caring for. Alternatively, let them look down at you for a change. This can re-balance the power within your relationship and may help you to forge a bond.

**Enjoy what people say.** Give people time to say what they want in their own way. Try not to criticise or correct. Be patient. Let the conversation unfold naturally.

**Don't be afraid of silence.** Try not to force a conversation. Let people feel comfortable with your company without speaking.

**Smile when you are being spoken to.** Smiling encourages intimacy and trust. Everyone should smile more anyway!

# Getting Started



# Preparations

1. Choose a reasonable-sized, well-lit, comfortable **room** where you won't be interrupted.
2. **Select a main exercise** for the day.
3. If appropriate, select a **suitable theme** (see 'Creating a Theme', below)
4. Ask participants to **sit or stand** in a circle. If the main exercise is Creative Writing or a visual arts activity, the circle should be around a table. Otherwise make sure that there is an open space at the centre.
5. Start the workshop by **telling everyone your name**, then asking participants to tell you their's. Move around the circle allowing everyone to introduce themselves.
6. Tell everyone briefly what activity you're all going to be doing, and why. **Explain** the theme of the day, if there is one. Focus on the positive: this is going to be fun!
7. **Run two warm-up exercises**. These are designed to prepare participants for the main activity, to relax them and get them into the swing of things.
8. After the activities, run at least **one cooling-down exercise**. These enable participants to finish the workshop feeling positive about themselves.

# Creating a Theme

It can be fun, and it's often helpful, to establish a theme for the day's activities.

- Themes should be broad so all participants can relate to them: summer, fashion, hobbies, colours, local area, etc.
- Seasons and seasonal events provide good themes.
- Participants may have ideas about the themes they'd like to explore, too. Ask what interests them, what they'd like to investigate.
- You could introduce a theme by playing related music. For the examples above you might opt for *Summer Holiday* (Cliff Richard), *Dedicated Follower of Fashion* (The Kinks) or *Messing about on the River* (Josh MacRae).
- You could also introduce a theme by bringing in related objects for participants to examine, e.g. bucket and spade, hats, bags, knitting needles and wool, a football etc.
- Discussing potential themes at the end of an activity ('what should we be thinking about next time?') fosters continuity and gives participants the chance to mull over the issues concerned throughout the period prior to the next session.

There are a few rules to remember when leading Arts-based activities for people living with dementia.

## **Rule 1: If you ask a question, listen to the answer**

Offering people the space to talk fosters confidence about their ability to communicate, their role within the environment and their well-being in general. Being listened to is in itself hugely empowering. Nobody wants to feel ignored.

## **Rule 2: Accept, don't correct**

Try not to correct words or phrases that people use to describe feelings or ideas. Accept the words they use without comment. Enjoy them. See the creative possibilities behind them. There is no wrong way to answer a question, write a word or phrase, paint an image or sing a song. It's all personal expression and should be valued as such.

## **Rule 3: Be positive**

Never criticise, hector, disparage or complain. There may be a place for frustration but it's not here. Likewise sarcasm.

## **Rule 4: Value & encourage contributions**

Encourage the individuality of expression and contribution of each person. This is a founding principle of Person-Centred Care. Reassure them that they're doing well. Try to get friends and family members involved, too – the more the better!



### **Rule 5: Don't be embarrassed**

Some people find certain activities (singing in public, for example) a bit embarrassing. Don't be afraid! A singing workshop may feel awkward initially but after a while the joy and power of the songs will take over. Remember that it's your role to encourage others to feel confident and safe to take part.

### **Rule 6: Don't worry about the mess**

Some exercises may require a bit of furniture-shifting. Others employ art materials, which will need to be packed away afterwards. Try to use tidying-up time productively. Share the work whilst discussing how the exercise went. Reassure everyone that it was fun. Tell them how well they did. Shared mundane tasks offer the opportunity for unguarded conversations. Tidying time might prove the most productive part of the activity.

### **Rule 7: Laugh**

Share a joke. Have fun together. But make sure you're laughing *with* people and not *at* them.

### **Rule 8: Enjoy yourself**

Relax. These activities should be fun for you, too!

### **Rule 9: Warm Up**

Warm-up exercises are designed to allow participants to become acquainted with each other, to shed inhibitions and to get into the swing of things. With a focus on laughter and sharing, warm-ups help to break the ice and to bring everyone together as part of a group. They're also a lot of fun!

# Warming Up



# 1. Cushion Name Game

**Aim:** *Introducing participants to one another. Giving them the confidence to use their own voices in a group.*

**Equipment needed:** *4 or 5 different cushions.*

1. Arrange participants in a circle, either standing or sitting.
2. Introduce a 'happy' cushion (possibly the softest/brightest-coloured) and pass it around the circle. As each participant receives the 'happy' cushion, they should state their name clearly, as if they are feeling extremely happy, before passing it on.
3. Now replace the 'happy' cushion with a 'sad' one (darker, harder or shabbier, perhaps) and repeat the exercise – this time with participants pretending to be extremely sad as they announce their names.
4. Different cushions, each representing different emotions, are passed around. Everyone mimes the emotions as they receive them: frightened, shy, angry etc.
5. For more laughs, try *descriptive* cushions: heavy, hot, slippery, smelly - or *activities*: giggling, humming, dancing etc.

## 2. Changing Objects

*Aim: Encouraging spontaneity. Laughter. Improvisation.*

1. Arrange participants in a circle. Stand a volunteer in the centre.
2. The volunteer imagines an object and mimes its use. Observers attempt to guess both object and action.
3. When everyone has guessed the imaginary object, the volunteer is replaced with another.
4. The new volunteer now mimes using the same object *but in a completely different way*. So what began as a banana may be used as a telephone, a comb, a clarinet, a puppy etc.
5. After a full round has been made, try and get everyone to recall the different ways in which the object was used. Which ones were the funniest? The silliest? Can the group think of any other ways the object might be used?
6. Start again with a new volunteer and imaginary object: you can play this game any number of times.

# 3. Miming & Copying

**Aim:** *Communicating without words; miming; watching and copying.*

1. With participants in a circle, begin by miming an action. The action should be clear and easy to understand: drinking a cup of tea, perhaps, or opening an umbrella.
2. Repeat the mimed action and ask people to begin to copy you when they've worked out what you are doing. Soon you'll end up with a room full of people drinking imaginary cups of tea! Finish only when everyone is miming the same action as you.
3. Ask for volunteers to think of and mime actions of their own. As before, members of the group have to guess the action and copy it until everyone has worked it out.
4. Continue until everyone who wants to lead the group has had the chance.

## 4. 'What Are You Doing?'

**Aim:** Stimulating the imagination; getting people moving; miming.

1. Participants form a circle, either seated or standing (offer them a choice when it's their turn).
2. Mime an activity that is clear and easy to understand: playing the piano, for example.
3. The person to your left asks you what you're doing.
4. Reply by saying an action that is completely different from what you're actually doing (if you are playing the piano you might suggest that actually you are cleaning your teeth).
5. Stop miming piano-playing. The person to your left starts to mime cleaning their teeth.
6. The person to *their* left now asks them what they are doing, only to receive another random answer.
7. Continue until everyone has had one or two goes.

## 5. 'What's in the Bag?'

**Aim:** Working together; improvising words; imaginative visualisation.

1. Arrange participants in pairs. Suggest a subject (winter, Christmas, a party, food etc).
2. Pass an imaginary bag to one member of each pair.
3. Ask the recipient to pull an item relating to the chosen subject out of the imaginary bag, then to mime the use of that object – before passing it to their partner.
4. Both partners now examine the imaginary object and discuss what colour it is, how heavy it is, where it was found etc.
5. Now ask the second person to pull an imaginary object out of the bag. Repeat the exercise.
6. When the miming stage is over, arrange everyone into a circle. Ask if anyone wants to talk about their imaginary objects. Perhaps they could mime their use to the group so everyone can guess what they are and discuss them.

## 6. Mirrors

***Aim:** Honing observation skills; miming; working supportively without verbal communication.*

1. Organise participants into pairs, a metre apart, facing one another.
2. Ask one partner slowly to mime a simple activity (playing the piano, tying a shoelace etc).
3. The other partner's goal is to copy the activity as if they're a reflection in a mirror.
4. Both partners remain in the same place, separated by the imaginary glass. What happens if the first partner reaches out to touch the glass?
5. After a while, swap roles so the second partner leads.
6. If the exercise goes well, ask each pair to demonstrate their mirror work to the rest of the group. After each pair has had a go, encourage everyone to applaud.



# 7. Contact Piano

***Aim:** Attentive listening; physically responding to music; building confidence in interaction with others.*

***Equipment needed:** CD Player. Piano music CDs.*

1. Arrange the group in a circle.
2. Put a CD on. Ask people to play along with the music using their hands on an invisible keyboard - as if they themselves are the performers.
3. Encourage participants to imagine that the imaginary keyboard extends along their own bodies, and to continue playing up their arms and shoulders, over their heads, then down the upper body and along their legs.
4. Now take a break and arrange the group into pairs facing each other.
5. Invite one person to play the piano music on their partner's hands, up their arms and over their head.
6. Swap roles so both partners get the chance to perform.
7. If everyone has enjoyed the exercise, ask them to demonstrate their playing to the rest of the group. Encourage everyone to applaud.

# Arts Activities



Everybody loves music. It's uplifting. It can be shared. Everyone can participate by singing or playing along and, if that's too much, all they have to do is sit back, relax and listen.

Music is an especially important Arts-based activity for people living with dementia. An unusual characteristic of some dementias is that while they steal memories apparently at random, they tend to leave certain facilities intact. Music and lyrics are often retained. This can be useful for carers because:

- 1) It means that everyone can participate in musical activities.
- 2) Music can act as a powerful trigger for memories and emotions, accessing places not reached by other activities. If someone recalls the lyrics to 'Yesterday', singing along might just prompt memories of the first time they heard the song.

## Singing Workshop Tips

- Find a time of day that works best for residents. Mid-morning or just before lunch are usually good. You could even make it a regular daily event.

- Whether the goal is singing, writing new lyrics or just listening along, the choice of music is important. Your key criterion should be familiarity. Choose songs that people *know*. It makes no difference whether it's Mozart or Motorhead: if everyone knows it, give it a go!

- You may find it easier to lead the workshop in pairs or small teams.

- Even if a resident appears to be asleep during the singing they may well be listening.

- You don't need to stand in a circle. Let people move around if they wish. This is an activity that can be enhanced by movement.

- Confidence and enjoyment are the keys to singing well.

- If participants (or you yourself!) are a bit shy, it can help to bring in a CD: singing along with music that's already playing is far less intimidating than attempting to start a song on your own.

- Keep encouraging people to listen to themselves and each other – and to applaud everyone's efforts.

# Favourite Songs

## ***Suggested warm-up exercise: 7.***

1. Ask people for their favourite songs. Make a note of them.
2. Choose a few that you have the words for and that most people know. The idea is to get everyone to join in, so familiarity is crucial. In Liverpool we've found that *Danny Boy*, *What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor*, *Loch Lomond*, *Amazing Grace*, *Molly Malone*, *My Darling Clementine* and *You'll Never Walk Alone* go down a storm. Seasonal songs and hymns work really well, and could be part of the day's theme if there is one.
3. Let everyone know what song you're going to start with. Better still, let them choose it themselves.
4. Before actually starting, position yourself next to an enthusiastic participant: a pair of singers starting confidently is more likely to encourage involvement than a lone voice.
5. Once you're all ready, start singing.
6. Encourage participation: anyone who doesn't want to sing could keep the rhythm by clapping or clicking their fingers. The more noise, the better!

7. Once the song is complete, all applaud each other. Take a quick breather, discuss the song briefly and ask what participants would like to sing next.

8. Carry on for as long as people are enjoying themselves.

9. Any songs left out from your original list can be saved for the next session.

# Scaffold Songs

**Suggested warm-up exercise: 7**

**Equipment needed:** CD player; CDs; pens and paper.

1. Play a recording of a song that most people know (*My Way* by Frank Sinatra, the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* etc).
2. Now work together to re-write the lyrics. You could choose a theme to work on, describe an ordinary day in the lives of the people in the group, or just make up some nonsense words.
3. Play the music again. Sing along with the new lyrics.
4. If participants are comfortable and enjoying themselves, try singing the new lyrics without the backing of the recording. Try speeding up or slowing down the song – or even putting the words to a different tune altogether.

## NOTE

It's worth giving this exercise a little thought beforehand in case no-one has any immediate ideas how to begin. One way to get started is to write the chorus first, get familiar with that and then progress to the verses. Coming to the activity with an idea or two prepared is a good idea: a first line gives everyone something to start with.

# Creative Writing





# Creative Writing

Stories and storytelling are part of what make us human. We all know stories, we all read stories – and we watch them all day on our TVs. One of the great cruelties of dementia-based illnesses, of course, is that they often steal the most precious stories of all: our own.

Which is why storytelling and creative writing exercises are so important for those living with dementia. Inventing a story, a song or a poem can be immensely satisfying. You don't need any special apparatus or training. You just have to use your imagination.

Storytelling and creative writing open up wonderful avenues for Arts-based activities, too. If someone's written a story or poem, why not ask them to read or tell it to the rest of the group? That way, everyone can enjoy it.

The other reason that creative writing exercises are so important, of course, is simpler. They're *fun*.

The following pages contain a series of activities designed to get the creative juices flowing. You don't have to be Shakespeare to take part. You just have to make stuff up. Easy!

# Memory Poem

**Aim:** *Creating a memory poem.*

**Equipment needed:** *Flip chart; paper/notepads; pens; scissors.*

**Theme:** *Select a theme in advance*

**Suggested warm-up exercises:** *1, 3, 4, 5*

1. Choose a theme everyone will be able to explore.
2. Give each person five strips of paper, each with one of the senses ('see', 'hear', 'feel', 'smell' and 'taste') written at the top.
3. Ask everyone to write on each strip five sense memories connected to the day's theme. For example, if your theme is 'holidays', memories might include 'the smell of the sea'; 'the taste of ice cream'; 'the feel of a cotton dress'. Note that this step may take some time and that participants may need help with the actual writing.
4. Each person then reads out the five sense memories they have written down. )The workshop can end here or if there's time you could progress to the next step.)
5. Lay all the paper strips on a large sheet from the flip chart to make a vertical list of sense memories.
6. Read this aloud, then encourage people to change the order of the strips of paper to make the poem

sound better, funnier, or more emotional.

7. Give the whole piece a title and your group sensory poem is complete! Read it aloud.

# A Life in 100 Words

**Aim:** Writing a brief theme-based autobiography.

**Equipment needed:** Paper/notepads; pens. Extra carers/volunteers may be necessary.

**Theme:** Select a theme in advance

**Suggested warm-up exercises:** 1, 3, 4, 5.

1. Partner each participant with a carer or volunteer. Explain that together they're going to write about their lives in 100 words, and that the words will be based around one particular theme.
2. Explain the day's theme.
3. Carers/volunteers now encourage their partners to explore their lives through the chosen theme, gently quizzing them about the past. For a food-based theme, carers might ask about favourite dishes when they were children (*what were they? Who cooked them? What did they taste like?*); for a holiday theme, childhood vacations might be the key (*where did you go? Who drove you? What was the best thing about the trip?*).
4. Carers write down responses in the form of a list
5. When the autobiographies are complete, they can be read out either by the participant or their carer (make sure you leave enough time for this at the end of the activity).

6. People may want their autobiographies framed to keep, or you could put them all together, type them up and print them as a book.

## **NOTE**

- **All memories, even inaccurate ones, should be accepted without comment.**
- **Make sure each autobiography is praised.**
- **Participants usually find these memories very emotional. It's important to be sensitive to this when running the workshop.**

# 100 Word Life Poem

Boiled eggs and soft roes  
All with toast  
Chips in hot newspaper  
At Trafalgar Square  
Pink custard and semolina  
Mum wrote a letter to the school  
Tinned salmon sandwiches  
The dinner ladies laughed  
Sunday hotpot, potatoes all sticky and crisp  
The first Greek tomato  
Sweet coffee in tiny cups  
Chocolate and oranges on a building site  
Fish straight out of the sea  
And blended bananas  
Underwear for laundry staff  
Bathrooms for care assistants  
Records, (Music) for nursing staff  
Jobs and work places for Managers  
Plants in gardens for gardeners

# Haiku ('hi-koo')

**Aim:** Composing a collective Haiku poem.

**Equipment needed:** Paper/notepads; pens/pencils.

**Theme:** Select themes in advance

Haikus are traditional three-line Japanese poems. They follow a very simple structure:

Line 1: 5 syllables	<i>'She does-n't know it,</i>
Line 2: 7 syllables	<i>She's dan-cing in her slipp-ers</i>
Line 3: 5 syllables	<i>I would-n't want to.'</i>

1. Explain to the group that everyone is going to write a Haiku poem. Make sure participants understand what that is.
2. Introduce a theme and nominate 2 or 3 writers.
3. Ask everybody to come up with words, phrases or short sentences relating to the chosen theme and have the designated writers record these on a large sheet of paper.
4. When the page is full, split everyone into smaller groups, each with a designated writer.
5. Now each group sets about reconstructing their words and phrases into the three Haiku sentences.
6. When the Haikus are finished, they can be read aloud and discussed.

# Storytelling





# Eye to Eye Contact

**Aim:** *Imaginative storytelling; awareness of non-verbal communication/how it can be used to share emotions.*

**Equipment needed:** *None - but you may need to move furniture to clear floor space.*

**Suggested warm-ups:** *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.*

1. Ask for two volunteer 'actors'.
2. Stand the pair facing each other and ask them to make eye contact. The rest of the group observes.
3. The actors now attempt to move around the room *without losing eye contact*. Once they've got the hang of it, tell them to move around in different ways: to speed up, slow down, walk in new directions or at different distances. Have them stand still, then start moving again. Suggest that they walk at different levels. Ideally they should use all the available space without ever losing eye contact.
4. Let the actors move around for at least a minute before stopping them.
5. Now ask the rest of the group what stories they saw. Suggestions can be prompted with questions: *where do you think the pair has been? Where were they going? What were they doing? What was their relationship?*

# What's the Story?

**Aim:** Developing storytelling skills/imagination.

**Equipment needed:** None - but you may need to move furniture to clear floor space.

**Suggested warm-ups:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

1. Ask for two volunteer 'actors'.
2. Stand the pair side-by-side, then have one take two steps backwards so that they are slightly behind, and to one side, of their partner.
3. Prompt the other participants to take a good look at the actors – and to imagine a story about them. *What's going on? Who are these people?* If nothing emerges, try asking direct questions. *'What's the story here? What's happening?'* Encourage everyone to say what they think. Accept every idea: there is no right or wrong answer.
3. Have the actors swap places. Ask the audience *'What's the story here? What's happened?'* Different stories should emerge.
4. Finally, stand the actors side-by-side. *What's the story now?*
5. You may find that some stories generate further discussion and conversation.

# True Stories

**Aim:** Social interaction; storytelling from experience.

**Equipment needed:** Wristwatch/clock

**Warm-ups** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

1. Organise participants into pairs. Ask each pair to choose a talker and a listener.
2. Explain today's theme.
3. Inform participants that everyone is going to get three minutes to tell their partner a story of their own that relates to the theme of the day. Stories should be true, but shouldn't contain personal revelations: nothing that they wouldn't want widely shared.
4. Make a note of the time, then instruct the talkers to start their stories.
5. After three minutes are up, stop the exercise and swap roles. Talkers become listeners, and vice versa.
6. When both partners have had an opportunity to tell a story, bring everyone back together and share some of the stories. Don't dispute the truth of stories or question whether they really happened. Accept all accounts and value all contributions.

# Stories & Memories

***Aim:** Encouraging people to share something about themselves.*

***Equipment needed:** A variety of props (household objects, souvenirs, flowers, toys etc).*

***Suggested Warm-ups:** 1, 2, 5.*

1. Scatter the props across a broad table at the centre of the room. Encourage everyone to look at them, pick them up and examine them.
2. Ask each person to choose one object and keep it with them.
3. Once everyone has an item, ask participants one by one to show their's to the group and explain why they chose that particular object. Gently question them about their choice, prompting them to discuss the item, what they think about it and what it makes them think about.

## **NOTE**

This exercise is a good starting point for a number of follow-up activities. If it prompts discussion, participants may want to write a short story or a poem about the objects, their individual choice of object, or the exercise itself. If not, the props - or the table laden with props - might make a good still life model for an art session.

# Group Storytelling

**Aim:** *Imaginative thought; group bonding.*

**Equipment needed:** *Storytelling 'baton' (any distinctive object that can be passed around easily).*

**Suggested Warm-ups:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

1. Introduce the story baton. Let everyone examine it while you explain that you are all going to collaborate together to create a short story. The baton will be passed around in a circle. Whoever receives it has to add a little bit to the developing plot.

2. Holding the baton yourself, start telling the story. You could begin anywhere - but some suggested openings might be:

*'A man walks into a room. He is carrying a parcel. He carefully puts the parcel down on a table and starts opening it. When he sees what's inside he gasps, as...'*

*'A woman goes to the train station. While she's queuing for a ticket, she notices a man walking across the station looking casually about. As he passes a small group of people he picks up a suitcase. 'Stop!' she shouts, 'Thief!', and chases after him...'*

*'A man is fishing by a river when his line begins to pull. He picks up his rod - and feels something huge on the line. His rod bends, his back aches: he's almost being pulled in. He's thinking 'what's in this river?' when suddenly...'*

3. Now pass the baton to the person to your left. Ask them 'What happens next?'
4. If someone doesn't want to tell a part of the story, they can simply pass the baton on to the next person.
5. Allow the baton to circle the group until a natural ending to the story emerges.
6. If the story begins to drag, ask if the next person can find an ending.

## **NOTE**

This exercise is fun and can be extremely productive. If you want to develop the ideas you've invented you could write up the stories and frame them, or use them to inspire further stories, poems or paintings.

# Movement



# Movement Exercises

Singing, listening to music and composing stories and poems can be hugely effective therapeutic activities for people with dementia. But they're largely sedentary pursuits. Try getting people up and about, too. Not only is movement liberating in itself but research has shown that mental exercises are often performed better, and recalled more accurately, if accompanied by physical activity.

## Movement Exercise Tips

- Before you start, make sure there's enough space and that the floor is clear.
- Many people find the idea of expressing their emotions physically embarrassing - especially if others may be observing. Reassure everybody that no-one's watching. Try and make the room reasonably private: close the door to non-participants, if possible. Bear in mind, too, that some of these exercises can be done with the eyes closed.
- If mobility is an issue, concentrate on moving specific limbs instead of the whole body. There's no reason why these exercises can't be done by people in wheelchairs if they focus only on moving their hands, arms, facial expressions etc.



# Moving Together

**Aim:** Establishing physical contact with others; listening to/appreciating music.

**Equipment needed:** CD player/CDs (preferably instrumental). You may need to move furniture to clear floor space.

**Suggested Warm-Up:** 7.

1. Put a CD on. Ask two volunteers to move into an open space and face each other (if the room's big enough, more pairs can perform this activity together).
2. Designate one participant the 'leader', the other the 'partner'.
3. Tell them to reach towards each other and make hand contact – either palm-to-palm, or finger-to-finger. Once established, this contact must not be broken.
4. The leader now begins to sway in time with the music - and the pair starts to move together. The leader initiates the movements while the partner is in charge of maintaining contact. Together they explore the space around themselves.
5. Swap roles. Now the partner leads.
6. Once both parties are confident, have them bend and stretch, turn, move around and to make use of all the space available.

**Aim:** *Physical movement; using the body to express emotion.*

**Suggested Warm-ups:** 3, 4.

1. Ask participants to sit or stand comfortably. Take a few deep breaths together. Tell them to think about any parts of their bodies that might be sore or tense - and to imagine those parts relaxing a little.

2. Explain that you're going to ask everyone to close their eyes and use their bodies to express some emotions (if mobility is an issue, they should focus on *parts* of their bodies such as hands or faces).

3. Say that you're going to start by reading out some common emotions ('happiness', 'sadness' etc). You'd like everybody - with their eyes shut - to *mime* those emotions. It doesn't particularly matter what they *do* (everyone's got their eyes closed. No-one's watching!) What's important is that each participant uses their body to express how the emotions make them feel inside.

4. Have everyone close their eyes and take a few more deep breaths to relax. Now call out some emotions: 'happy'; 'sad'; 'angry'; 'anxious' etc. Make sure you allow enough time for everyone to react to each.

5. Now tell participants to open their eyes and explain that the second part of the activity involves not just emotions but *scenarios*. You want them to imagine how they might feel in a series of given situations – not to speak about them, but to use their bodies to express their feelings.

6. Eyes closed again. Start suggesting scenarios: ‘You’re waiting for a bus that’s late’; ‘You’ve won the lottery’; ‘You’ve got toothache’; ‘You’re five years old and it’s Christmas Eve’ – and so on.) Again, leave enough time between examples for everyone to react.

## **NOTE**

You could turn this into a game. Ask individuals to demonstrate their mimes while the others try to guess the emotions concerned.

All of these activities can be used to lead to a group discussion about how we communicate through our bodies.

# Cooling Down



# Cooling Down Exercises

At the end of all activities, remember to thank the group for taking part. Tell everyone that you've enjoyed the experience and that you hope they have, too. Let them know that you're looking forward to the next session and ask them what they most enjoyed doing and what they least enjoyed doing. Here are a couple of cooling down exercises you may find useful.

## The Golden Circle

***Aim:*** Working together. Relaxing.

1. Ask participants (seated) to place their hands on their laps, palms up.
2. Explain that you're all going to work together to lift an imaginary golden ring to shoulder height.
3. All take a few deep breaths together to get ready. Then give a 3-2-1 count to start the lifting.
4. Slowly, work with the group - all moving together - to raise the imaginary ring up towards the ceiling. Then gently bring it back down again.

## Gift Giving

1. Tell the group that everyone's going to end the session by giving the person to their left an imaginary gift. Have them think for a few moments about what their neighbour might like (something they spoke about during the workshop perhaps, or just a bunch of flowers/box of chocolates).
2. Going around the circle, each participant now tells their neighbour that they're giving them a gift, then mimes picking it up and passing it over. As they do so, they should imagine the size of the present, its weight and how it feels to hold.
3. Each recipient mimes opening the imaginary gift, reacting to it and using it. They thank the donor.
4. Then it's their turn to pass a gift on to the person to their left.

# Next Steps



## Home Managers

Caring for people with dementia can be immensely rewarding. At times, however, it can also be frustrating - and it's easy to become disheartened. Keeping a personal care journal helps. Journals provide carers with a means of keeping tabs on their own emotions and reflecting on their care-giving.

Encourage care staff to write down their thoughts at the end of each day and to re-read entries from time to time. Not only will this provide insights into their own creative abilities, it will enable them to look at their care-giving in a private, honest way.

It's also worth encouraging writing exercises as part of a supervision plan. You could get carers together in a group and try some of the creative writing exercises in this guide. Changing the subjects from general themes to specific issues (*'getting older'*, *'how I feel about dementia'*, *'my life as a carer'*) may offer insights into your staff's feelings, concerns and overall well-being. It can also provide a snapshot of morale.

Try not to challenge opinions – even if they're critical. Acknowledge them calmly and take them on board. If nothing else, appreciate your staff's candidness and honesty: it takes a lot of courage for people to criticise their employers. Remember that you're all on the same side!



## Arts and Cultural Organisations

If you'd like to invite professional artists to work with you, or to find out more about arts activities available for people living with dementia in Merseyside, contact:

**Alzheimers Society (North West):** 01904 633599  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Chaturangan Dance:** 07850 127823  
[www.chaturangan.co.uk](http://www.chaturangan.co.uk)

**Collective Encounters:** 0151 345 6266  
[www.collective-encounters.org.uk](http://www.collective-encounters.org.uk)

**Merseyside Dance Initiative:** 0151 708 8810  
[www.mdi.org.uk](http://www.mdi.org.uk)

**National Museums Liverpool:** 0151 207 0001  
[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

**North West Arts & Health Network:** 0161 247 1094  
[www.artsforhealth.org/network](http://www.artsforhealth.org/network)

**The Reader Organisation:** 0151 207 7207  
[www.thereader.org.uk](http://www.thereader.org.uk)

To find out more about regional and national case studies, examples of good practice, and other arts and cultural organisations, try:

[www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/](http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/)  
[www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/](http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/)